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ABSTRACT

There is a growing awareness of a sensitivity to ethnic and cultural issues in the helping professions. For the last decade a variety of multicultural concerns have been receiving increased attention. Although there is awareness, the mental health fields have not really addressed the issues involved in the counseling of culturally diverse populations. This study examined the relationship between scores of students on The Empathy Test (TET) and the Black Intelligence Scale of Cultural Homogeneity (BITCH). Subjects were 15 female and 7 male graduate students enrolled in a non-required, cross-cultural experiential/didactic counseling course at a large Midwestern university. Students were divided into two groups (higher and lower) based upon BITCH scores. No significant difference was found in empathy scores for the two groups. These results suggest that although there was a difference in the amount of knowledge about black culture by the two groups, this did not translate into differential responses on the TET. The instructor's observations throughout the semester suggested the same; knowledge of the black culture did not guarantee that individuals would be more empathic in their responses when role playing and discussing issues. These results suggest that the addition of one didactic course on multicultural counseling to an already established curriculum is not enough to prepare professionals adequately. (ABL)

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Multicultural Counseling: Knowledge Is Not Enough

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Abstract

The results of this study suggest that a group of students who have significantly more knowledge about Black culture score no higher on empathy than students with less knowledge. It is suggested that multicultural training for counselors should be more than a didactic course.

Multicultural Counseling: Knowledge It Not Enough

There is a growing awareness of a sensitivity to ethnic and cultural issues in the helping professions. For the last decade a variety of multicultural concerns have been receiving increased attention. Corey and Corey (1988) summarize these as: (1) a trend to acquire knowledge about and experience working with culturally different clients; (2) a concern for adapting techniques and interventions so that they are more relevant; (3) a recognition of the importance of counselor self-awareness; (4) implications for practice in the differing assumptions and value orientations underlying Eastern and Western therapeutic systems.

Consequently, counselors need training in counseling individuals from different cultures. According to Ridley (1985) a focus on ethnic and cross-cultural counseling is not only desirable but mandatory. He discusses five imperatives for ethnic and cultural relevance: the professional participation imperative, the ethical imperative, the cultural context imperative, the scholarly imperative, and the legal imperative.

Although there is awareness, the mental health fields have not really addressed the issues involved in the counseling of culturally diverse populations (Corey & Corey, 1988; Pedersen, 1985). Most ethical codes mention the responsibility to recognize special needs of diverse clients (AACD, 1981; APA, 1981). Yet Pedersen and Marella (1982) state that existing guidelines are inadequate in a cross-cultural context. Pedersen (1986) suggests that the APA ethical guidelines are culturally encapsulated, and Casas (1986) says that AACD guidelines does not provide specific guidelines for serving minority groups. Casas adds that most counseling students and teachers are not aware of

their culturally biased attitudes and that both AACD and APA need to revise accreditation guidelines to deal more directly with ethnic variables.

Ibrahim and Arrendondo (1986) propose the addition of two standards in regard to the preparation of counselors. First, programs in their policies, procedures, and curricula should recognize and respond to the cultural diversity among students, faculty and clients. Second, educators should be prepared to teach and to supervise competently about cross cultural factors in counseling practice.

Sue (1981) suggests that the training of culturally skilled counselors has been hindered by problems such as training being a low priority and a haphazard manner of approaching the task. He also notes a gap between awareness, understanding, and behavior. He states that each cross cultural course should contain the following 4 components: consciousness raising, affective, knowledge, and skills. The results of the following study lend support to this notion by suggesting that knowledge is not enough. The study examines the question, "Is there a significant difference in scores on The Empathy Test (TET) between a group of students who score high on the Black Intelligence Scale of Cultural Homogeneity (BITCH) and a group of students who score low on the BITCH?"

METHOD

Subjects. The subject for this study were 15 female and 7 male graduate students enrolled in a non required, cross-cultural experiential/didactic counseling course at a large Midwestern university. All had completed 30 or more graduate credit hours in Counseling Psychology and had a GPA of 3.0 or better. One was Black American, three were international students, and the others were American white. The mean age was 29.6.

Instruments.

The BITCH-100: A Culture - Specific Test (Williams, 1972). The BITCH is a culture specific test dealing with content material specific to the Black person. Williams states that it enhances the possibility of measuring accurately what is inside the Black person's head. It has two purposes, to provide an evaluation of Black people on a cultural specific test and to gain information on Whites to determine how much information they have about the Black experience. The author compares it to the Binet and the WISC.

The BITCH is not intended to be culture fair since items were chosen to discriminate between Blacks and Whites, and it was designed primarily for the Black experience. Williams notes that it does pick up intellectual indicators not commonly found in conventional tests. There is a low correlation between subtests of the California Achievement Test and the BITCH; this is interpreted as meaning that the BITCH and the CAT measure different phenomena. Test-retest reliability is .84 and higher. A complete discussion of reliability and validity is given in the manual.

The Empathy Test (TET) (Kerr and Speroff, 1947) describe the purpose of the TET as being supplemented by the theory that individuals who are superior in empathic ability are persons who are above average in understanding and anticipating the reactions of other people. APA clinical fellows had a mean score of 87.7 on the TET, and reliability coefficients range from .67 to .81; see the manual for a complete discussion.

Method. During the first two weeks of class, the BITCH and TET were administered to all students. The BITCH was given first. Both instruments were given in a group. The instructor initially explained that results would be used to assess intelligence and competency as counselors, as indicated by scores on the TET. Students were instructed to take these tests seriously because

scores would count some part of the semester grade. The primary objective of the exercise was to provide a "real"" stimulus for discussing the impact of testing upon racial minorities.

Results. The instruments were scored by a student staff member and checked by the instructor. The group of 22 was divided into 2 groups. The 11 who scored higher on the BITCH became Group 1 and the 11 scoring lower became Group 2. A t test was computed to see if the mean scores for Group 1 (72) and Group 2 (51) were significantly different; they were at the .001 level ($t = 3.58$). The standard deviations were 7.53 and 17.49.

A t score was then computed to see if the two groups were different in terms of empathy. The t score was .62, indicating no significant difference on the empathy mean scores, Group 1 (53) and Group 2 (57). Standard deviations were 20.71 and 16.85 respectively.

DISCUSSION

These results suggest that there was a difference in the amount of knowledge about the Black culture possessed by the two groups. However, this knowledge did not translate into differential responses on the TET. If knowing information about another culture was adequate, one might expect that those with the most knowledge would be more empathic; this was not the case. Also the instructor's observations throughout the semester suggested the same; knowledge of the Black culture did not guarantee that individuals would be more empathic in their responses when role playing and discussing issues.

While this study has limitations in regard to sample size and makeup as well as instrumentation, it does support the idea that more than knowledge about other cultures is needed. Many of the current training programs have responded to the call for multicultural counseling by adding one didactic course to an

already established curriculum. These results indicate that this is not enough to prepare professionals adequately.

As Sue (1981) suggests, this is not satisfactory training for those of us who will be counseling the culturally different. Rather we need a curriculum that stimulates awareness at more than a cognitive level. According to Sue, each course should contain: a consciousness raising component, an affective component, a knowledge component, and a skills component. Very likely one course will not suffice. Rather we need a systematically designed component that students can learn from on several levels. Only then can our programs hope to meet the spirit of the 1979 APA resolution that indicates that accreditation should reflect a program where students are prepared in a systematic manner to function in a multicultural, multiracial society.

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